1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DEATH

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761 Death is the real enemy of Lepcha life. Disease and hail and failure of crops occupy the Lepchas more emotionally, for these are possibly preventable accidents and against them precautions can be taken. But death is absolute and final and cannot be fought against; some precautions can be taken against a death which has struck one member finding other victims in the community, but against death itself there is nothing to do. Death is too terrible to envisage clearly or discuss often; death, and, to a lesser extent, the dead who have suffered death are hated and feared and not talked about.

764 Once a person is dead there are two things to do; the danger of the devil that has caused his death finding another victim in the community must be averted and the dead man must be got rid of as thoroughly and completely as possible. People who have left this world never return to it benevolently; if they do have any contact with the living it is as malevolent supernaturals, as devils. The older a person grows the less likely is he to hanker after the world he has left and therefore the less he is to be feared; children and young people suddenly torn from their life will surely turn into malevolent devils.

766 The infection and danger of death is strictly local and therefore if a person dies away from home no sort of ceremony is held for him; the body is just unceremoniously thrown into the river. Why should strangers be at the expense of a funeral? No relics will be returned. When the survivors hear of the distant death of a relative they will simply set up prayer flags. They will not hold a *sanglion* (death ceremony), for if the soul has turned into a *moong* it will haunt the place where it died and will not trouble *them*. That the soul of the dear departed will not be able to find its way to the *rumlyang* (paradise) does not matter. The ceremonies

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765 mourners dispersed they wiped their eyes and appeared soon after
152 to be in normal spirits. It seemed almost as though they were trying to hide their grief.

761 All the elaborate ceremonies which I have described are per-
764 formed to get rid of the dead; the dead are terrifying and should be feared, not loved. Death has no consolations.

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Maknyam *moong*[11] and will get pains as though the body were pierced, and pains

[11] This is the devil which causes death. It acts rather like a vampire; those people whom it kills become in turn Maknyam *moong*. Consequently it is in a way the evil ghost of one's ancestors—since they died by Maknyam *moong* and became it in their turn. At one time it used to be visible; but the *sanyoul koong* (tree) which grew in the mountains was cut down and barred its way; now the devil's body can no longer come out, merely its soul.

Maknyam *moong* runs in every family, but some families also suffer from Arot maknyam *moong*—the devil which causes violent deaths. Such a family is that of Kaji's (late) first wife. One of her brothers recently fell from a tree; a pregnant woman in the family was crushed by a falling tree.

in the heart and left shoulder, and shortness of breath. The parents should not buy red or white cloth, or bows and arrows, or any sort of animal from other people, or eat the flesh of carrion or drink rock or rain water. Should it survive till the fifth day of Choobu the crisis will be then. Care should be taken not to let it play with knives and other dangerous instruments. The following sacred books should be read: Numchya Chu, Tukzung Chosung, Nangsa Nanget, Dorjé Chu, etc. The Dafloh dance should be performed, incense burned, and holy *tyū* water sprinkled. The Tsatsoh Kyop (stamped *choten*) ceremony should be performed, and also Tsinmu Faat. The child should wear a yellow cloth. Some iron, the head of a chicken and the head of a monkey (? skulls) should be made into a bundle and put on the *kingkoor* (house altar).

For some time there will be many quarrels and general bad temper. (*Aside*: perhaps the baby has been shaken up inside.) All its life long the child will be in danger of death, and that is equally true of its mother. (I think this means that both are threatened by hostile supernaturals, and constant care is needed to ward them off.) Hlamen Djémé (this is the ambivalent supernatural, the god of the Mun, god or demon according as to whether it is pleased or angry) will plague the patient much. The Deut *moong* which is in the house plagues it as severely as if it were the child's mother. The Deut Shagu Kyop (4) ceremony must be performed at once.

The gods and devils are quarrelling over the child's body; should the devils win the child will die. Therefore the ceremonies must be done very properly. The child must avoid water out of rocks or from puddles. Had it not been ill everything it set hand to—trade, crops, animals—would prosper; it would have a life covered with flowers. But (figuratively speaking) a prayer-flag is tottering and must be set upright. Some covetousness (perhaps from a childless woman) has caused the trouble. The child is always in a hurry, inattentive to its parents. Its soul has been taken by Gongbu[12] and Mamoo Deut Tsen[13]

[12] This devil causes swelled stomach. To cure get an ox's horn and fill with rice seed; the lama will hold this and pray silently, and then *pék* the patient and give him some seeds. Butter, meat and *taki* must be mixed and set fire to, and taken outside.

[13] This is a trinity of supernaturals, consisting of the female Mamoo who is indigo, Deut *moong* who is white and Tsen *moong* who is red.

will give trouble. Maknyam *moong* (11) is in the house, and also a devil Badé which was sent in the time of the father or grandfather. Now the gods are angry and Daphlo should be performed. The child is constantly dreaming of human

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
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changes at the moment of death into a spirit, named *Mŭk nyam*; this change itself is termed *Hyit*. The *A pil* is said to get scared very easily and when frightened can even leave the body; the separation of the soul from the body results however in the instantaneous death of the human being. To protect small children from this danger, mothers often fasten round the neck or armwrist of the child a string with a snail shell on it, "as refuge for the soul".[10]

Illness and death are attributed by the Lepchas to a number of malignant demons who have to be propitiated by various ceremonies, in order to prevent their attacks or to rescue a victim from their influence. Among the host of these evil supernaturals, whose names and spheres of influence vary with the traditions of the different parts of the Lepcha land, there are some who are believed to be especially dangerous as they do not satisfy their greed by harming people through illness, but who try either to eat man's flesh or to destroy his soul. A few of these supernatural beings, as *Sang grong mung*, *Dŭt mung* and his wife *Sŭ mo mung*, etc. who seem to have been at one time widely known and feared among the Lepchas, are believed to have vanished since man started clearing the jungle and to settle even in the remotest parts of Sikkĭm.

Sang grong mung and his wife,—the supernaturals of the Lepchas mostly appear in pairs—are said to have been half men and half apes. Their abode were deep, dark caverns in the hills. They lived on human flesh and to satisfy their hunger they often tried to get people into their power by offering them presents. The person, who had met the *Sang grong mung* or his consort, had no other choice than to accept the gift; however, he had to take it with the back of his hands and not with the palms as customary, otherwise his life was lost.

Dŭt mung and his wife *Sŭ mo mung*—who was always accompanied by her servant *Sŭ mo thor*—had children and they lived in a house, just like men. Their hunting ground was the jungle, where they killed lonely travellers and ate their flesh. *Sŭ mo mung*, who was an ugly ogre with long matted hair and emaciated breasts, is said to have been very fond of seducing young men. To achieve her aim, she could change herself—by brushing her hair back and rubbing her body—into a lovely girl. She induced her victim, to follow her to her house, where she killed and devoured him; but sometimes, if she liked the man, she kept him with her for some time, hiding him from her jealous husband.

Another demon, frequently held responsible for the death of a person, is *Mă zŏm mung*, who is said to appear in the form of a huge black dog with ferociously gleaming eyes and a flaming mouth. To

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
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prevent this evil spirit from returning to a house, where he had just caused a death, the mourners on their way back from the funeral put hedges of thorns across the road, to prevent *Mă zóm mung* from following them. In some localities it is the custom to scare *Mă zóm mung* away by heating during the night after the funeral three huge stones on the hearth. The stones are later brought into the open and somebody of those present calls the name of this demon, asking him to come and eat some meat. The demon, who is believed to be very greedy, comes immediately and tries to swallow the stones, but he burns himself badly and runs away.

Shom mung is a malignant spirit, who causes people to commit suicide or murder. He creeps close to a man from the back and then suddenly enters his mind and taking possession of his victim, forces him ultimately to commit the evil deed. This demon is also held responsible for all accidental death.

A soul, which was captured by *Shom mung*, is unable to proceed to the other world unless it had been freed by a *Mŭn* from the power of the evil spirit. To perform this ceremony, a *Mŭn* has to come in the evening after the funeral to the victim's house. On this occasion, the *Mŭn* is wearing a red dress, with a head-band of the same colour. At the beginning of the ceremony, an animal is killed and its blood collected in a big, flat vessel in order to attract the bloodthirsty spirit. The *Mŭn* then takes her place in front of this vessel and goes into a trance. After some time she suddenly declares that *Shom mung* has entered the container and she throws now into the blood a grass whisk, which she had held ready in her right hand. Leaving the whisk in the vessel —"to keep the demon down"—she grasps a flat stick made from *Nyol hung*[11] wood, which is lying at her right side, and begins to beat frantically the surface of the blood pool, in order to "kill the demon". All those present, shouting and screaming, join her in this beginning, using sticks, stones and knives as weapons. After a while, the *Mŭn* takes the vessel outside the house and pours its contents into a hole, which had been dug previously in the compound, and then all weapons which were used during the ceremony, are also thrown into the pit, which is quickly closed. Only when this ceremony had been performed for somebody, who had fallen victim to *Shom mung*, can his *Mŭk nyam* be guided afterwards in the usual way to the *Rŭm lyang*. It is believed, that unless *Shom mung* is killed, he will become attached to the family which had omitted the rite just described, and he will kill its members one by one.

Another pair of dangerous supernaturals are the demon *Thing mung* and his wife *Nyo mung*, who are able to bring a man's life

placed behind the two upraised arms. A cloth, in its shape similar to that worn by dancers in Tibetan religious dances, is hung upon its shoulders. As a comprehensive description of further details of this image is available elsewhere[40] we would merely draw notice to the detail that the navel of the effigy is formed by a tortoise with a magic diagram upon its belly. This tortoise was described when speaking about the sacrifice to the hail demon Debrong Panoh. This rite also corresponds to the Tibetan *lTo* ceremonies and is regarded by the Tibetans as being purely of Bonpo origin.

12. KILLING THE MALIGNANT SPIRIT AROT MOONG, WHICH CAUSES VIOLENT DEATH

For this ceremony, a big horse and four smaller ones, all carrying riders on their back are made of millet dough, coloured red. Behind each rider, a red *yeu* together with *pong* sticks is planted and the smaller images are then placed into the four corners of a wooden plate, while the bigger image is put into the centre. In front of this a black figure of the *mamoo* is placed, together with an inflated animal's bladder. Other objects used in this ceremony are symbols of the 12 years cycle, four pots containing scrapings of iron, tree tips, poison and water from five rivers and various crops in leaf plates, prickly plants, and again arrows and spindles. The rest of this ceremony is described in *Himalayan Village* (p. 352). The four red images of riders seem to represent spirits, related to or identical with the *bTsan* demons of the Tibetans, who imagine these supernatural beings as ferocious riders of red colour. The red thread-cross would be then the *bTsan mdos* (or *tsen deu* of the Lepchas), as used in rite no 3.

13. THE SHIDOOK KYOB CEREMONY

If it is assumed that a person's death was caused by the demon called Shidook Moong, the ceremony called Shidook Kyob has to be performed. As this rite has already been

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
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Bhotanese, and others. Rheumatism is frequent, and intermittent fevers, with ague; also violent and often fatal remittents, almost invariably induced by sleeping in the hot valleys, especially at the beginning and end of the rains. The European complaints of liver and bowel disease are all but unknown. Death is regarded with horror. The dead are burnt or buried, sometimes both; much depending on custom and position. Omens are sought in the entrails of fowls, &c., and other vestiges of their savage origin are still preserved, though now gradually disappearing.

The Lepchas profess no religion, though acknowledging the existence of good and bad spirits. To the good they pay no heed; "Why should we?" they say, "the good spirits do us no harm; the evil spirits, who dwell in every rock, grove, and mountain, are constantly at mischief, and to them we must pray, for they hurt us." Every tribe has a priest-doctor; he neither knows nor attempts to practise the healing art, but is a pure exorcist; all bodily ailments being deemed the operations of devils, who are cast out by prayers and invocations. Still they acknowledge the Lamas to be very holy men, and were the latter only moderately active, they would soon convert all the Lepchas. Their priests are called "Bijooas:" they profess mendicancy, and seem intermediate between the begging friars of Tibet, whose dress and attributes they assume, and the exorcists of the aboriginal Lepchas: they sing, dance (masked and draped like harlequins), beg, bless, curse, and are merry mountebanks; those that affect more of the Lama Boodhist carry the "Mani," or revolving praying machine, and wear rosaries and amulets; others again are all tatters and rags. They are often employed to carry messages, and to transact little knaveries. The natives stand in some awe of them, and being besides of a

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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776 But we fail to understand it. We are naked at the time of our birth. Now too we are naked. When time will
[761] cease for us, the time of our death, it is impossible to say. We cannot give any news of the land of the gods. And at the time God calls us, mother and father cannot call us back. When the day of death is at hand, neither elder brothers, sisters, children nor daughters-in-law can call us back. When the day of the Lord dawns, then indeed has death passed away."[832c] The sacrificial texts quoted give us an idea of their vast varieties.

(*i*) Other Sacrifices

791 Although the Mun and the Bong-thing wield such a great
782 influence over and dominate the whole sacrificial organisation, there are all the same, some sacrifices which do not come within their sphere.

An old Lepcha said to us, "For our original sacrifice we, the Rong folk, offer the intoxicating drink Chi, in a wooden vessel together with rice and small dried birds on a banana leaf-plate. The Chi had to be prepared by a young girl who
[781] was still a virgin. The little birds had to be shot by a young lad who had had no sexual relations with anyone. The

[539] 832c go yu ma dyak ne djek go rung a gün do
But we do not understand it. At the time of our birth we are naked,

djek lo tang ka tzäd ga la a gün lo tang gäm
at present time we are also naked. When our time is over

amäx sa sut de dön ma gön
to tell the time of our death, that is not possible.

rum lyang sa sut ma gön
To give news of the land of the gods is not possible.

rum nöng lo lek dö tzäd ga abu amu lin ma gön chiang chia
At the time when God calls us, father and mother cannot call us.

pe plö lad chiang gam anam anom aköb ason
When the day of death is coming, elder brothers, elder sisters, children and

nyom li ma top sag ni rum sa sag ni tag nam che lat asa
daughter-in-law can no longer call us. When the day of God is coming, then is death passing away."